

Reading Essentials and Study Guide



The Muslim Empires, 1450–1800

Lesson 1 The Rise and Expansion of the Ottoman Empire

ESSENTIAL QUESTIONS

What factors help unify an empire? How can the creation of a new empire impact the people and culture of a region?

Reading HELPDESK

Academic Vocabulary

successor one that follows, especially one who succeeds to a throne or an office

domain a territory over which control is exercised

Content Vocabulary

janissary a soldier in the elite guard of the Ottoman Turks

gunpowder empire an empire formed by outside conquerors who unified the regions they conquered through their mastery of firearms

sultan “holder of power”; the military and political head of state under the Seljuk Turks and the Ottomans

harem “sacred place”; the private domain of an Ottoman sultan, where he and his wives resided

grand vizier the Ottoman sultan’s chief minister who carried the main burdens of the state and who led the council meetings

pasha an appointed official of the Ottoman Empire who collected taxes, maintained law and order, and was directly responsible to the sultan’s court

ulema a group of religious scholars who served as advisors to the Ottoman sultan; this group administered the legal system and schools for educating Muslims

TAKING NOTES: *Organizing*

ACTIVITY Create a chart like this one to show the structure of the Ottoman society. List the groups in order of importance.

Class	Description

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IT MATTERS BECAUSE

The Ottoman Empire reached its high point in the sixteenth century. At the time, it ruled lands in western Asia, North Africa, and Europe. The Ottomans contributed new designs to world art with their magnificent mosques (Islamic places of worship). The Ottomans also allowed people in their empire to follow their own religion.

Rise of the Ottoman Turks

Guiding Question *How did the Ottoman Turks establish power and expand their empire?*

In the late thirteenth century, a new group of Turks under their leader, Osman, began to build power in the northwest corner of the Anatolian Peninsula. The Osman Turks started to expand their territory. During this period of expansion, the Osman Turks established the Ottoman dynasty. In the fourteenth century, the Ottoman Turks gradually moved into the Balkans. The Ottoman rulers built a strong military that helped them gain control of new lands. The Ottomans also developed an elite guard called janissaries. The **janissaries** were children enslaved from the local Christian population. Then they were converted to Islam. Janissaries served the sultan, which was the title of the Ottoman leader. The janissaries served as foot soldiers or as administrators, who are officials who help run the government.

Knowledge of firearms spread in the late fourteenth century. The Ottomans began to master this new technology. With the use of the janissaries, the Ottomans defeated the Serbs at the Battle of Kosovo in 1389. During the 1390s, the Ottomans advanced northward and annexed Bulgaria.

Fall of the Byzantine Empire

As their empire grew to the west, the Ottomans eventually gained control of the Bosphorus and the Dardanelles. These are straits (narrow water passageways) that are separated by the Sea of Marmara. They connect the Black Sea to the Aegean Sea, which leads to the Mediterranean. The Byzantine Empire had controlled this area for centuries.

Under the leadership of Mehmed II, the Ottomans moved to end the Byzantine Empire. Mehmed laid siege to Constantinople. Eighty thousand Ottoman troops were fighting against only seven thousand defenders of the city.

The attack began on April 6, 1453. The Ottomans bombarded the city with huge cannons. They used the cannons to shoot stone balls as heavy as 1,200 pounds (545 kg) each. The Byzantines fought desperately for almost two months to save their city. Finally, on May 29, the walls of the city were breached, or broken down, and Ottoman soldiers poured into Constantinople. The Byzantine emperor died in the final battle, and the sack of the city lasted three days.

With the capture of Constantinople, the Turks linked the European and Asian parts of the Ottoman Empire. Mehmed II renamed the city Istanbul. The Ottomans now controlled an important city at the center of trade between Europe and Asia. As a result of the Ottoman control of Istanbul, Europeans looked to the seas for trading routes to Asia. Their explorations eventually led the Europeans to Africa and the Americas.

Expansion of the Ottoman Empire

From their new capital of Istanbul, the Ottoman Turks controlled the Balkans and the Anatolian Peninsula. From 1514 to 1517, Sultan Selim I conquered Mesopotamia, Egypt, and Arabia, the original

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centers of Islam. Through these conquests, Selim I was now in control of several of Islam’s holy cities, including Jerusalem, Makkah (Mecca), and Madinah (Medina). Selim declared himself the new caliph. That is, he named himself the defender of the faith and the **successor** to Muhammad.

After their victories in the east, Ottoman forces advanced westward. They moved along the African coast almost to the Strait of Gibraltar. At the same time, the Ottoman Turks began to expand into other parts of Europe. They moved back into the Balkans to gain more territory there. They took the Romanian territory of Walachia, but the Hungarians stopped their advance up the Danube Valley.

The reign of Süleyman I began in 1520. Under his rule, the Ottomans once again moved north along the Danube. They seized Belgrade, and in 1526, they won a major victory over the Hungarians at the Battle of Mohács (MOH-hach) on the Danube. The Ottomans then conquered most of Hungary and moved into Austria. They advanced to Vienna, where they were defeated in 1529. The Ottomans were also moving into the western Mediterranean. In 1571, however, Spain destroyed a large Ottoman fleet at Lepanto.

During the first half of the seventeenth century, the Ottoman Empire in Eastern Europe was peaceful. It was still powerful, but it was occupied with problems inside the empire. However, in the second half of the seventeenth century, the Ottomans again went on the offensive and restarted their attacks. They laid siege to Vienna again. However, a European army forced the Ottomans to retreat. The Turks were also pushed out of Hungary. The Ottomans kept the core of their empire, but they would never again be a threat to central Europe.



Reading Progress Check

Explaining What was the role of the janissaries in the rise of the Ottoman Empire?

Life Under Ottoman Rule

Guiding Questions *How was the Ottoman Empire ruled under a sultan? What were society and culture like in the Ottoman Empire?*

The Ottoman Empire was like other Muslim empires in Persia and India. Each was called a “**gunpowder empire**.” Gunpowder empires were formed by outside conquerors who unified the regions that they had gained control of. As the name suggests, the success of a gunpowder’s empire success was largely based on its knowledge and use of firearms.

The Imperial Sultans

The **sultan** was at the head of the Ottoman system. He had supreme authority both in politics and in the military. As the empire grew, the status and prestige of the sultan increased. The position of sultan added more and more outward show, such as rich clothing and costly possessions. Administration of the empire became centralized, and the sultan became increasingly isolated, or distant, from his people.

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The position of the sultan was hereditary. A son always came to power after his father died. The son who came to power did not have to be the oldest son, however. For this reason, there was often a struggle over which son would take power. The losers in these struggles were often executed.

The private **domain** of a sultan was called the **harem** (“sacred place”). The sultan and his wives lived here. When a son became a sultan, his mother became the queen mother, and she acted as a major adviser to the ruler. As a result, she had considerable power in the affairs of state.

The sultan controlled his bureaucracy, or groups of officials who run the government, through an imperial council. The council met four days a week. The **grand vizier** was the chief minister. He performed the main duties of the state and led the meetings of the council. During the meetings, the sultan sat behind a screen, and he listened to the council. He then privately told the grand vizier what he wanted him to do.

The empire was divided into provinces and districts, each governed by officials. The central government appointed pashas to help the officials govern. The **pashas** had been trained in a palace school for officials in Istanbul. The sultan gave land to the senior officials. The senior officials then had the jobs of collecting taxes and supplying armies for the empire from these lands.

The Topkapi (“iron gate”) Palace in Istanbul was the center of the sultan’s power. Mehmed II had it built in the fifteenth century. Like Versailles in France, it had an administrative purpose but also served as the private home of the ruler and his family.

Ottoman Society

The Ottomans were Sunni Muslims—just as most people were who spoke Turkic and who were from the Anatolian Peninsula and western Asia were. Ottoman sultans had claimed the title of caliph since the early sixteenth century. In theory, they were responsible for guiding the members of the religion and for maintaining Islamic law. In practice, or actual fact, the sultans gave the religious duties to a group of religious advisers. These advisers were scholars called the **ulema**. This group administered, or managed, the legal system and schools for Muslims. All Muslims in the empire had to obey Islamic law and follow Islamic customs.

The Ottoman system, which was made up of mostly Muslims, was generally tolerant, or accepting, of other religions. Non-Muslims made up a significant minority within the empire. Non-Muslims did have to pay a tax. However, they were allowed to practice their religion. They also had the choice of converting to Islam. Most people in the European areas of the empire remained Christian. In some places, however, such as present-day Bosnia, large numbers of non-Muslims converted to the Islamic faith.

At the highest level of Ottoman society was the ruling class. Under them, the subjects of the Ottoman Empire were separated into four classes by their jobs:

- merchants: people who bought and sold goods
- artisans: workers who practiced a trade or craft and belonged to guilds
- peasants: farmers who leased (rented) land owned by the sultan
- pastoral peoples: people who moved from place to place as they herded their animals

Artisans were organized according to craft guilds. Each guild provided financial services, social security, and training to its members. After the ruling elite, merchants were the most privileged class in Ottoman society. They were largely exempt, or free, from government regulations and taxes.

Women in the Ottoman Empire faced the same restrictions that women in other Muslim societies faced. Yet, their position was somewhat better because of how Islamic law was applied in the empire. This difference was probably the result of Turkish traditions in which women were almost equal to men.

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For instance, women could own and inherit property. They could not be forced into marriage, and, in certain cases, they were even permitted to ask for divorce. Women often gained great power in the palace. In a few cases, women even served as senior officials in government.

Architecture and the Arts

The Ottoman sultans were enthusiastic patrons of the arts. Artists came from all over the world to compete for the sultans' generous support for the arts. Artists produced pottery; rugs, silk, and other textiles; jewelry; and arms and armor. All of these works of art decorated the palaces of the rulers.

The Ottoman Empire's greatest contribution to world art was in architecture. The mosques of the last half of the sixteenth century were especially magnificent. The Ottoman Turks borrowed from the Byzantines and modeled their mosques on the open floor plan of Constantinople's Byzantine church of Hagia Sophia. They did this by creating a prayer hall with an open central area under one large dome.

Sinan was the greatest Ottoman architect. In the mid-sixteenth century, he began building the first of his 81 mosques. One of Sinan's masterpieces was the Süleymaniye Mosque in Istanbul. Each of Sinan's mosques was topped by a large dome. Often the entire building was framed with four towers, or minarets, at the corners.

The sixteenth century was also a high point for rugs and textiles. The Byzantine emperor Justinian had introduced silk production to the West in the sixth century. Under the Ottomans, the silk industry had a fresh start. Factories made silks for wall hangings and, most of all, for court costumes. The making of rugs were a peasant industry. The rugs were made of wool and cotton in the villages of different regions.



Reading Progress Check

Explaining What aspects of Ottoman life did the sultan control?
